

The gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JOHNSON);

The gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. BEATTY);

The gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HUDSON);

The gentlewoman from California (Ms. Jacobs);

The gentlewoman from Oklahoma (Mrs. Bice);

And the Members of the California delegation.

The members of the committee from majority and minority leadership will retire from the Chamber to escort the Speaker-elect to the chair.

RECESS

The CLERK. Without objection, the House will stand in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

There was no objection.

Accordingly (at 4 o'clock and 52 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1718

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Clerk at 5 o'clock and 18 minutes p.m.

SWEARING IN OF SPEAKER

The Sergeant at Arms announced the Speaker-elect of the House of Representatives of the 117th Congress, who was escorted to the chair by the Committee of Escort.

Mr. MCCARTHY. Colleagues, friends, and fellow Americans, it is my honor to welcome you to the first day of the 117th Congress. We are here with the support of our families and the faith of our neighbors to be their voice in Washington.

Since Congress first sat in this room, Americans have always found a way to ensure that their needs were top of the mind. In fact, when Abraham Lincoln served here, Members of Congress only had small desks on the House floor to store their work. One of those desks now sits in the Cannon Office Building tunnel. As Members traveled back and forth to the Nation's Capitol, they were compelled to carry all of their work with them. There were no filing cabinets and no servers in the cloud or offices. Their desk was their office. Members rarely went anywhere without physically bringing their constituents' concerns with them.

These small desks are a timeless reminder to every American that the House is made to represent you, the people; and that is a responsibility I welcome and embrace every day. Today, however, it is easier than ever to neglect or ignore this responsibility. From social media to special interest groups, to the culture police, there are endless temptations to distract from why we are here and who is truly important.

Sadly, the last Congress suffered from this neglect. In this Chamber 2

years ago, the Speaker spoke of a new dawn for the middle class. But for the next 2 years, the majority was consumed with everything else. During some of the most challenging times for our country, I felt Congress was on the sidelines.

When the need for more pandemic relief was obvious, did we deliver in a timely manner the lifeline America needed?

Or did we say nothing was better than something until politics dictated our actions?

When unrest filled into the cities and communities across the country, did we deliver safety that Americans wanted?

Or did we let calls to defund the police intimidate us from protecting life, liberty, and property?

When Americans relied on essential workers to keep our country moving, did we serve the people's House in a way Americans deserved?

Or did we shrink and reward Members who stayed home, skipped work, and still got paid?

The unfortunate answers to these questions underscore why the last Congress was the least productive Congress in 50 years.

It has been said that a house divided cannot stand. If there are any lessons that Americans have learned in the last 2 years, it is this: a House distracted cannot govern.

I wish I could say that the majority in Congress is committed to changing for the common good and focusing on what really matters, but I am concerned that the early actions are pointing in the wrong direction.

Tomorrow, this majority of the new 117th Congress plans to adopt new rules that would silence our constituents' voices in Congress. Those rules throw away more than 100 years of representation in our Nation's Capitol and effectively kill the key opportunity to amend legislation.

Worse, they would penalize any Member who shares news or views that maybe their allies in the media deem fake. They actually make it an ethics violation, which is usually reserved for such unbecoming conduct as bribery or corruption. Under these rules, all Members are equal, but some are more equal than others. For our constituents, it means freedom of speech is silenced, good ideas are stifled, and dissent is punished.

Why would an American political party use this as your first action in Congress?

Perhaps they feel an urgency to protect their political careers. Given the message that the American people sent to Washington, the grip is slim and the majority is slimmer. Two months ago to this very day, the American people said, Enough. Enough with politicians who dictate what you can say, where you can eat, or whether you can go to church; enough with politicians who ignore the stay-at-home lockdowns they impose on the rest of us; and enough with arrogance and hypocrisy.

Americans are fed up with it, and we Republicans are too. As the party of Lincoln, Republicans understand what it means to carry our constituents' concerns with us at all times. We are a growing, working class coalition of proud Americans who are more energetic, united, and confident than ever before. We believe in the exceptionalism of this Nation and are not afraid to say it. We have listened to our constituents. We heard how things needed to change, and we made a commitment to America to restore our way of life, rebuild the economy, and renew the American Dream.

That is what we campaigned on. That is what we offered in every district. And if the voices of the people matter, that is how we plan to govern.

The response from the American people to our commitment was resounding. Even though we were outspent in district by district, no Republican incumbent was defeated—none. All across this country, voters endorsed common sense, not conflict. It was a referendum against a radical agenda to defund the police and punish hard work. It was a wake-up call.

The question I ask of this Congress is: Were we listening?

As we enter the new Congress, I ask every Member to step out of your office, go to the Cannon Office Building tunnel, look at that small desk, and ask yourself: What is in your desk?

Here is what is in mine: As the son of a fireman, I know how our police officers and first responders put everything on the line to keep us safe. I will never, never, never vote to defund them.

Can we make that same commitment to America?

As a former small business owner, I understand how tough things can be even in the best of times. As we battle the coronavirus, our small businesses are battling lockdowns that are destroying livelihoods and making it impossible to beat the odds. So I will not hike their taxes.

Can we make that same commitment to America?

As a fourth-generation Central Valley Member from California, I represent farmers and oil field workers who rise at the dawn to go to work; who pray to God; and who raise the next generation of good, decent citizens. I will respect their individuality and their freedom, and I will not forget them.

Can we keep that commitment to America?

No more misplaced priorities. The American people deserve better. America is worth fighting for. Americans' rights are worth fighting for. Their dreams are worth fighting for; their voices are worth fighting for; and, most importantly, their voices are worth being heard on this floor.

During the darkest days of the Civil War, when this Nation was literally burning with division, Abraham Lincoln advised us to strive "to maintain